

VZCZCXYZ0011
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHC #5234 1432211
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O P 222203Z MAY 08
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE 0000
INFO RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 0000

S E C R E T STATE 055234

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/22/2033
TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [ETTC](#) [RS](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: (S) POTENTIAL SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE DELIVERY TO SYRIA

Classified By: ISN/CATR Acting Director Malzahn
Reasons 1.4 (c) and (d)

¶1. (S) Summary: Russia is planning to ship SA-24 (Igla-S) air defense equipment to Syria in late May. Despite repeated assurances to the U.S. beginning in 2005 that Russia would only provide Syria with vehicle-mounted systems, we have reason to be concerned that Russia may provide man-portable systems. End Summary

OBJECTIVES

¶2. (S) Post is requested to approach appropriate host government officials on May 23 regarding the potential shipment of SA-24/Igla-S air defense equipment to Syria. Post should pursue the following objectives with the GOR (note: that the second bullet is derived from intelligence and must be used verbatim):

SECRET/REL RUSSIA

-- Note our appreciation of the cooperation we have received from Russia on MANPADS issues, especially in increasing controls on and preventing the proliferation of MANPADS.

--Note that we have previously raised our concerns with Russia about providing Syria with military equipment, particularly advanced systems such as the Igla-S air defense system.

--We have information that Syria is to receive a shipment of IGLA-S air defense equipment in late May from a Russian facility. We are concerned that shipment may contain man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS).

-- We would urge you to adhere to your commitment to prevent MANPADS proliferation as outlined in the 2005 bilateral MANPADS Arrangement.

--We are extremely concerned about the possibility that Syria will acquire additional modern Russian air defense weapons. The transfer to Syria of IGLA-S air defense weapons could be diverted by Damascus to terrorist groups or other sub-state actors and trigger sanctions under U.S. laws.

--Note that Russia's continued arms sales to Syria (and Iran) could affect Congressional consideration of the U.S.-Russia civil nuclear cooperation agreement. Such destabilizing sales --even if not nuclear related-- raise questions about Russia's commitment to nonproliferation.

--We appreciate Russia's past assurances that it would only provide Syria with vehicle-mounted systems that could not be used as shoulder-fired systems.

-- We urge you to investigate this information as soon as possible and share with us the results of your findings.

-- As Syria has demonstrated it is not a reliable end user for Russia weapons and there is an unacceptably high risk of it passing these weapons on to Hizballah or other terrorist groups, we urge you to not transfer any surface-to-air missile systems, and especially man-portable, to Syria.

BACKGROUND

¶3. (S/NF) The U.S. has raised the transfer of SA-24/Igla-S missiles with the GOR several times starting in 2004. In 2005, Russian officials confirmed that Russia was providing surface-to-air missile systems to Syria, but assured the USG that it would only provide Syria with vehicle-mounted systems that could not be used as shoulder-fired systems. Russia understood the risks of providing man-portable systems; DFM Kislyak informed then Ambassador Burns that Russia would not provide systems that "could end up in Russia,s backyard." The U.S. remains concerned with the transfer of all lethal military equipment to Syria. Systems that are vehicle-mounted do not prohibit them from being transferred to terrorists and non-state actors, as the transfer of the C-802 to Hizballah has demonstrated. (Note -- the C-802, which is a anti-ship cruise missile, was fired at an Israeli warship during the 2006 conflict between Hizballah and Israel.) In 2005, the U.S. and Russia signed a bilateral MANPADS Arrangement that "recognizes the importance of further development of international cooperation in preventing MANPADS from falling into the hands of terrorists." The Arrangement was signed by then-MOD Ivanov and Secretary Rice.

Reporting Requirement and POC

¶4. (U) Please report delivery of the demarche and any immediate response by May 27.

¶5. (U) Department point of contact is Margaret T. Mitchell, (202) 647-2433, mitchellmt2@state.sgov.gov. Please slug all replies to ISN and EUR. Department thanks Post for its assistance.
RICE